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# **From the Margins: Filipina Skilled Migrants tell their Stories**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
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**Lilia Maria Sevillano**

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## ABSTRACT

For decades, the Philippine government has sent many of its citizens overseas as part of its labor migration policy. Filipinos also leave home due to the economic instability, graft and corruption that have plagued the country post-colonially. When feminized labor demand increased, around the 1990s, the phenomenon of mass Filipino women migration began and continues to this day. Filipinas living or working overseas are often ethnically stereotyped as either ‘maids’ or ‘mail order brides.’ The dominant focus of previous research on Filipina domestic workers and mail order brides has, in some respect, reproduced and reinforced these racial, sexist and classist stereotypes. This literature has all but neglected the fact that many Filipina migrants are skilled professionals. Except for the nursing profession, the migration experiences of skilled Filipina professionals remain invisible in the literature. This study addresses this gap in the literature and creates a space for the experiences of Filipina professionals living and working in New Zealand to be brought to the fore. I conducted repeat interviews with seven Filipinas who migrated to New Zealand. The interviews focused on their migration experiences, how they made sense of their migration, and how they negotiated their identities as women and as migrants somewhere new. Using a narrative approach, I was guided by feminist and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* research principles that placed the women’s voices and narratives at the center throughout the whole research process. More specifically, I used Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) voice-centered relational method to analyze the transcriptions. This method complemented both feminist and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* principles because it allowed the women’s voices to be heard more clearly and provided a sensitivity to the diverse perspectives that emerged. Although the women were all Filipinas, the diversity across their migrant experiences ranged from feeling humiliated by participating in menial household tasks, to drawing closer together as a family, through to feeling proud of being able to accomplish many tasks alone. There were also commonalities with regard to the physical, social, and professional transitions that they encountered. As a whole, the women made successful transitions as they assimilated into New Zealand society. These women were happy about the decision to make New Zealand their home. This research contributes a new narrative to Filipina migrant experiences that celebrates the stoicism and successes of the Filipina.

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